

University Affairs Board

Vice-Provost Students' Report # 4

Task Force on Student Housing - The Task Force on Student Housing was formed by Vice-President and Provost, Shirley Neuman, in January 2003 and is Chaired by the Vice-Provost, Students. The Task Force has met four times. At its first meeting the committee reviewed the terms of reference and met with the Provost to discuss emerging issues around student housing and the mandate of the Task Force. At the second meeting there were three presentations. Pearl Karamalis, Coordinator of Student Housing Service, gave a presentation on the process of admission to residence. Ron Venter, Vice-Provost, Space and Facilities, spoke briefly on the acquisition of 89 Chestnut. Jennifer Adams and Gail Milgrom from Campus and Facility Planning gave a presentation on the status of residential planning for the UofT campuses. The third meeting focussed on a discussion of student life issues. Chris McGrath, Director of Residence at UTM, Jim Dunsdon, Director, Student Housing and Residence Life, UTSC and Susan Addario, Director of Student Affairs, each gave a presentation on various aspects of residence life. At the most recent meeting, the committee began the process of formulating policies for student housing.

The Task Force on Student Housing has been advertised widely. An announcement and call for submissions was published in The Bulletin in January. A website has been established. A notice has been posted on the UofT homepage. The Bulletin is preparing a story about the work of the Task Force. An announcement has been sent to the leaders of APUS, SAC and GSU asking them to inform their constituencies of the opportunity to make submissions to the Task Force. An announcement and call for submissions has also been published in student newspapers. To date, 18 submissions have been received from students from a variety of backgrounds and administrative staff working in the student services/residence areas.

The Task Force has entered the phase of collecting data, developing a set of policies, setting targets for the future and developing best practices for various student housing models.

First Off-Campus Residence - 89 Chestnut was purchased by the university to address the demand created by the residence guarantee and increasing enrollment, as well as the financial commitments necessitated by the use of hotels and external residences. The former Colony Hotel will be transformed over the summer into an exciting residence for both first and upper year students from all Arts and Science Colleges, the Faculties of Applied Science and Engineering, Physical Education and Health, Music and the International Student Exchange Program. Students will enjoy large double rooms, weekly cleaning, a meal plan that is reflective of the diverse needs of students, music practice rooms, up-to-date electronic wiring, fitness and pool facilities and much more. New College will take the lead in managing U of T's newest residence. We are currently searching for a Dean of Residence. A residence house committee will be formed within the next month.

TTC VIP Program - The University is very pleased that SAC has taken on a leadership role with respect to this issue. SAC's efforts in lobbying for these discounts this year and over the last 20 years—ultimately leading to the announcement of a discount program by the TTC—should be regarded as a significant achievement. Discounts on Metropass prices, even at the levels proposed by the TTC, are certain to benefit a great many students within the University of Toronto.

SAC is running a referendum proposing a student levy to match the TTC discount. The University itself does not have an available allocation of funding to provide matching dollars to a student levy towards a larger discount on the sale of TTC passes. The only reasonable and potential opportunity for matching funds that has been identified is the new round of funding announced by the Government of Ontario under the Ontario Student Opportunity Trust Fund (OSOTF). In other words, while the potential matching funds would have been provided by way of the University, the source would have been the Government of Ontario.

I have been considering the broader implications with respect to the sale of Metropasses on an institutional basis. Our initial examination of this suggests that the infrastructure support, staffing and operational requirements to sell Metropasses to thousands of campus community members are substantial. Since there is no commission provided on the sale of passes under the program and a premium is paid by the vendor on the sale of passes by credit card, and because there will be operating costs associated with the sale of passes, we must also acknowledge that there is a direct cost associated with the sale of each pass. Our initial rough estimates suggest that the cost of operating such a program on an institutional basis is, at minimum, tens of thousands of dollars per month. In addition, we do not have an appropriate space which is available to handle the sales of passes each month. The Administration at U of T and York University have jointly requested a meeting with the TTC to discuss the costs of administering this program.

SAC is currently working with UTSC to sell Metropasses to UTSC students in April as the first pilot program.

CFS referendum process - On February 25, 2003, Jim Delaney of the Office of Student Affairs wrote to the presidents of the Students' Administrative Council (SAC), the Association of Part-time Undergraduate Students (APUS) and the Scarborough College Students' Union (SCSU), to provide his response to the requests from the three organizations for increases to fees to support the cost of membership in the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS). Mr. Delaney's letter has been circulated to members of the Board. Following a comprehensive assessment of the referendum process, he concluded that there are insufficient grounds to recommend approval of the fee increases to the University Affairs Board. He has also recommended that each of the student societies seeking membership in the CFS hold new referenda under improved procedures and rules. I concur with Mr. Delaney's assessment and recommendations, and will not bring forward a recommendation for fee increases at this time.

Task Force on Orientation and Transition - Last summer, the Interim Vice-Provost, Students (Dr. Sheldon Levy) struck a task force to consider several important issues related to the welcome and transition of new students to the University of Toronto. The Task Force has completed its work and has made a number of important recommendations in respect of new policies and guidelines for orientation activities; recognition of a shift in the demographics of the incoming student group, particularly around age and diversity; striking a better balance between divisional and central programming; and development of more first year transition support. Some of the recommendations will result in policy change which this Board will see in the coming months (the Policy on Alcohol Use, for example); other recommendations will be reflected in the work of student services and student affairs offices across the University. A copy of the entire report is available on the Student Affairs website.